

Twelve keys to answered prayer



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TWELVE KEYS TO ANSWERED PRAYER Why does God not answer most people's prayers? Do you know how to pray in a way that will get real results? Here are 12 practical steps that will help secure the favor of God for answered prayer! Key #1—Pray Sincerely to the True God It is absolutely vital that you pray to the very real God of the Bible if you expect genuine answers to your prayers. He reveals Himself to mankind in many ways—in creation, in the Bible, in His foretelling specific divine intervention in world affairs and in direct ANSWERS to those who seek and obey Him through fervent holy worship.

In our modern, ecumenical (worldwide) approach to religion, we may think that praying to some vague “blob” in the sky or to an idol of Buddha is just the same as praying to the CREATOR—the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel and Jesus Christ, but it is not the same at all! The true God was revealed by Jesus Christ (Matthew 11: 27). To one of His disciples, He said, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known ME...? We read of Jesus Christ acknowledging that God was a loving, divine Person—a “Father. And we see the Father acting through Christ to heal the sick, to comfort the downcast and to teach those whom He calls to keep not only the Ten Commandments, but all of His words as a way of life (Matthew 19: 17). Christ also set an example for us in praying to the Father: “Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You’” (John 17: 1). We serve an awesome God, with limitless power and glory! When you get down on both knees and lift up your hands in prayer to the great CREATOR of the universe, you should think of to whom you are praying.

Remember that He is not only the Creator, but also the active Sovereign ruler of the entire universe and the Bible says that it is God's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom and all that is contained in it. Be sure you always pray specifically to This God—the true God—and to no other. As you begin your prayer, think about whom you are praying to and consciously worship this Great God who gives you life and breath. Key # 2—Study the Bible It naturally follows that praying to the true God involves believing what He says. And we find His words—instructing human beings how they should live—in the Holy Bible.

It reveals essential knowledge that we could not acquire in any other way. It is God's "Instruction Manual" for humanity. It tells us who God is what He is like and how we ought to serve Him. In its pages we find God's own instructions (not suggestions) as to how we ought to live for and pray to Him. You will not receive this full instruction by just "going to church" or by carelessly reading bits and pieces of the Bible for comfort or inspiration. God commands us in His Word, "Earnestly study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman unashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Timothy 2: 15).

To know God, to understand His will and to believe in His promises, one needs to regularly study His inspired Word in an orderly way—just as you might study a science textbook or a volume on history. A good place to start is the book of Matthew. Read this through slowly and carefully—noting what Jesus actually said, paying particular attention to the many examples of answered prayer. Key #3—Deeply Repent of Your Sins Although from time to

time God hears the prayers of anyone who sincerely cries out to Him in time of need, He is not bound by His Word to do this.

God's Word says, " Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear dull, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59: 1-2). It is not our job to psychoanalyze or " spiritually dissect" those who have not had their prayers answered in the past. But we have a duty to ask ourselves: " Do I worship the true God? Do I do His will? Please be honest with yourself. It is easy to rationalize or to reason around this very clear scriptural teaching about obeying God's law for having your prayers answered.

As you grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3: 18), He will live His life in you more and more fully over the course of your Christian life. Certainly you will not be perfect (mature) all at once, and no human being has ever been perfect (spotless) except Jesus Christ Himself. But you will be walking in the way of the Ten Commandments by surrendering to Him. By walking with Christ in this manner, you can be assured of having more powerful answers to your prayers than ever before. Key #4 Forgive Others

Another vital key to answered prayer is our willingness to truly FORGIVE others. Frankly, our loving Father in heaven simply does not hear those who come to Him in a spirit of revenge, bitterness or hatred. Immediately after giving us the " Lord's Prayer"—the outline prayer describing the right general approach to talking with God—Jesus went on to instruct His

followers: “ If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6: 14-15).

And Psalm 66: 18-20 says, “ If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: but verily (truly) God hath heard me: He hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be the God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me. ” Key #5—Seek God’s Will Another key to successful prayer is to be absolutely sure that—as far as possible—you align your will and your requests with God’s will. As you zealously study the Bible and yield to let Christ live within you, His will increasingly replaces your own. It affects how you pray.

You come to realize that God has made all men and women in His image—that He will call all mankind to understanding and repentance in His own time. With this in mind, you will not be praying just for your own good, but for the good of others as well. Then you can sincerely say to God, as Jesus did: “ Not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22: 42). Remember this key phrase from the outline prayer of Jesus in Matthew 6, “ Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (v. 10). We all need to focus on this as we pray. What is really best for us and everyone concerned in the long run—only God knows for sure!

On the other hand, the Bible contains literally dozens of promises and/or direct indications of what God has done or will do in regard to answered prayer. If we pray in faith that God will hear us—and in accordance to His will—we may be sure that He is listening. “ Now this is the confidence that we

have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5: 14-15). Key #6—Have Faith in God The more you drink in of the Bible, the more deeply you will realize the importance of FAITH. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11: 6). The bottom line is that you cannot please God without Faith, and generally speaking, the Bible makes it crystal clear that God will not hear and answer your prayers unless you come to Him in faith. " But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord" (James 1: 6).

We need to take careful note of this vital teaching of Jesus Christ with respect to prayer and faith: " Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you whoever says to this mountain, ' Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say unto you, whatever things you ask when you pray, BELIEVE that you receive them, and you WILL have them" (Mark 11: 22-24). By continually drinking in of the Bible and praying for faith, you will find that your faith will increase more and more.

Understand that living faith is produced by God's Holy Spirit within us, and Jesus said, " If you then, being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy spirit to those who ask Him! " (Lk. 11: 13). God wants to give us those things we ask for if we humbly ask for them and our motives and priorities are not selfish

ones. So we need to pray to Him continually to give us the FAITH we need. We need to learn to BELIEVE in the promises of God. We need to learn to believe that God is REAL—that He has perfect wisdom, perfect love and perfect POWER.

Realize that He will KEEP all his promises! We need to learn to imitate Abraham, the father of the faithful (Romans 4: 16), for he “ did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also ABLE to perform” (Rom. 4: 20-21). This is real faith. This is the attitude you must have to receive genuine answers to your prayers. Key # 7—Be Persistent If your child asks you just once for a bicycle and then seemingly forgets about it and never brings the subject up again how deep is his or her desire for it?

How much do you think they would appreciate it if they did get one? And so it is when we ask for something from our Heavenly father. Before He supernaturally intervenes, God wants to know that we deeply desire whatever we ask for, and that we will respect and worship Him for answering our prayer. In other words, God uses our need or desire as a vehicle to draw us closer to Him, spiritually—to cause us to focus on His will and on what is really best for us and for any others who might be involved. If we carelessly ask for something, and then virtually forget that we ever did, what would that indicate?

It might tell God that we are not all that interested in His doing what we ask! Or it could be that all our desires are shallow, perhaps constantly changing,

and that we would not feel a deep sense of appreciation and worship even if He constantly answered such shallow prayers! (See Luke 18: 1-8). God wants us to be persistent. He wants us to walk with Him, talk with Him and commune with Him continually—day after day in this age, and ultimately throughout eternity! The Apostle Paul instructs us to “ pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5: 17).

David said in Psalm 55: 16-17, “ As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. ” So pray regularly. Spend plenty of TIME communing with Jesus Christ and your Heavenly Father. And never—EVER—stop praying to God! For, in more ways than one, your very life depends upon this contact! Key #8—Pray Fervently In Hosea 7: 14 God cites as one of the reasons He did not hear the prayers of ancient Israel was that “ and they have not cried unto Me with their heart. The Moffatt translation of this same verse reads, “ They never put their Heart into their prayers. ” What about us? Do you and I pray with our entire being? Or do we just rattle off a memorized prayer like some pagan chant or perhaps sleepily mumble a few half-hearted requests to God just before drifting off to sleep? Again, remember Jesus’ example of getting up early to pray to the Father. For prayer was vitally important to Christ. That is why He apparently put it first on His schedule—before anything else could interfere.

And he probably came back to God repeatedly as the day progressed. The Book of Hebrews tells us about Christ’s passionate, heartfelt prayers: “ Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death,

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and was heard because of His godly fear” (Heb. 5: 7). It is good to go to a private place to pray as Jesus instructed in Matthew 6. Alone, we can occasionally cry out to our temptations or difficulties where only the help of God Himself can fully take care of the situation.

In Luke 22: 44 Jesus was crying out to His Father in such an intense and passionate manner that some of His capillaries may have literally burst—filling certain sweat ducts with blood. In our modern secular, hedonistic, laid back society, we need to grasp that the truly vital issues of life are not material. Rather, they are spiritual—having to do with our Creator and with all eternity. They are certainly worthy of getting excited about. So let us put our hearts into our prayers. Let us be fervent!

Let us be passionate as we pour out our hearts to the awesome Personality who wants to be our real Father: the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity” (Isaiah 57: 15). Key #9—Ask God to Fashion and Mold You A genuine man or woman of God is one who has totally surrendered to the will of the Creator. Through the Prophet Isaiah God tells us: “ But on this one will I look: on Him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isa. 66: 2). This attitude of seeking God’s will rather than our own—of total submission to our Heavenly father—is vital to our prayer life if we are to receive constant and powerful answers.

Do you want to truly grow spiritually? Listen to Ephesians 4: 13: “ Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. ” If you’re serious about growing and becoming mature then we need to all “

wrestle with God” in our prayers as Jacob literally wrestled with Him and prevailed (Gen. 32: 24-32). We need to engage Him in long, thoughtful conversation about how we can more fully yield to Him, walk with Him in our lives. We need to constantly ask God to help us fulfill the great PURPOSE for which we were born.

It is fine—within limits—to pray for physical things. BUT THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF PRAYER IS TO HELP US FOCUS ON GOD, YIELD TO HIM AND SURRENDER OUR WILL TO HIS AS WE CULTIVATE A VITAL INTERACTIVE RELATIONSHIP. In this way He becomes increasingly real to us. Through constant and heartfelt Bible Study and prayer we must seek God’s will. We must grasp that our past ideas and attitudes about God and religion in general need much improvement. This process will bring us to a point in our lives where we learn to walk with Him, talk with Him, quietly commune with Him off and on all day long.

Sincerely ask Him to mold you into His own image. The approach of yielding to God as you pray, of asking Him to rebuke and chasten and fashion you, is one of the vital keys to really powerful prayer. Key #10—Give Praise and Thanks to Almighty God Another of the qualities that made King David a man after God’s own heart was the sincere love, worship and adoration that he continually expressed toward the great creator who blessed him, sustained him and guided him. The entire Book of Psalms is literally filled with David’s prayers of worship and adoration.

Listen to Psalm 18: 1-3, “ I will love you, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will

trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold, I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies. ”

Fifty (50) verses and David never asked for one thing! All he does is give God praise and thanks for what He has already done. When was the last time you got down on your knees or walked on your feet and just gave God continuous repetitious praise and thanks for what He has already done?

We need to constantly thank and praise God for every good gift and for His help and blessing in every situation (1 Thess. 5: 18). Instead of losing control in our enthusiasm for sports figures, rock and rap stars or any other human idols, let us unashamedly pour out our whole being in thanking, praising and worshiping the God who made us and who gives us life and breath. This is the God who forgives us time and time and time again, who guides and blesses us, and who in the end—plans to share His eternal glory with us if we will only respond and learn to love Him as He loves us. Key #11—Pray in the Name of Jesus Christ

To truly and correctly use Jesus’ name in prayer we must OBEY Him and again ask according to His will. Remember that in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ warned: “ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘ Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Those who do not really know the true God or His way are simply not capable of properly coming before Him in the name of Jesus Christ. To pray in the name of Jesus is to approach the throne of God through the name—the office and authority of Jesus Christ who gives us access to the very throne room of God.

So as you approach God in heartfelt, regular prayer, be sure you are obeying your Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Though He does not expect instant spiritual maturity, He does want us to walk in His way through the help of the Holy Spirit. When we do we can then come to the Father through Christ alone to make the direct contact of effective prayer. And remember, James said, “the effectual (unceasing) fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5: 16b). Key #12—EXPECT AN ANSWER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!